

Message Text

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SUBJECT: CANAL TREATY NEGOTIATIONS; TORRIJOS MEETING WITH STUDENTS

ATTN: ARA/PAN, MOREY BELL AT OPENING OF BUSINESS.

THE FOLLOWING IS THE FULL TEXT OF THE GOP PRESS RELEASE
(EMBASSY TRANSLATION) AS SUBMITTED TO LA ESTRELLA
DE PANAMA FOR PUBLICATION IN THE JULY 10 MORNING
EDITION. THE ARTICLE REPORTS ON THE JULY 9 MEETING
HELD BY GENERAL TORRIJOS AND OTHER HIGH GOP OFFICIALS
WITH STUDENT LEADERS AT FORT NIMARRON.

BEGIN TEXT:

"AN END TO THE SECRECY WHICH ONLY BINDS PANAMA", SEEMS
TO HAVE BEEN THE RESULT OF THE IMPORTANT MEETING
THE CHIEF OF GOVERNMENT AND COMMANDER IN CHIEF OF
THE NATIONAL GUARD, GEN. OMAR TORRIJOS H., THE COMMAND STAFF,
THE CHIEF NEGOTIATOR JUAN ANTONIO TACK, CERTAIN MINISTERS,
AND OTHER HIGH OFFICIALS HELD YESTERDAY (JULY 9) WITH STUDENT
LEADERS FROM ALL SECTORS OF THE COUNTRY.

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IN THE MEETING WHICH WAS HELD AT FORT COMARRON IT WAS ESTABLISHED THAT THE GOVERNMENT OF THE U.S. HAS NOT HONORED ITS COMMITMENT TO CONFIDENTIALITY IN THE NEGOTIATIONS, IN THAT IT HAS GIVEN INFORMATION TO CONGRESSMEN, THE MILITARY, AND EVEN TO CIVILIAN RESIDENTS OF THE CANAL ZONE (ZONIANS). THIS HAS PROVOKED, IT WAS LEARNED, THE MOUNTING OF A CAMPAIGN AND COMPLETE STRATEGY AGAINST THE PANAMANIAN POSITION. THE FINAL PROOF OF THIS EFFORT IS THE ECONOMIC BLACKMAIL OF CUTTING OR BLOCKING THE BUDGET FOR THE NEGOTIATIONS, AS THE "SNYDER AMENDMENT" ATTEMPTS TO DO.

THE NATIONAL AUTHORITIES RECOGNIZED THAT SOME PROGRESS HAS BEEN ACHIEVED IN BETTERING THE PANAMANIAN POSITION IN REGARD TO THE TERMS OR DURATION FOR THE GRADUAL RETURN OF THE CANAL ZONE, HOWEVER, IT CANNOT BE AFFIRMED THAT THIS PROGRESS RESPONDS SATISFACTORILY TO THE JUST ASPIRATIONS OF THE PANAMANIAN PEOPLE TO RECOVER ITS LANDS AND ITS GREATEST RESOURCE.

RESPONDING TO QUESTIONS ON SOME OF THE ROADBLOCKS ("TRANQUES") IN THE NEGOTIATIONS, THE NEGOTIATORS SAID THAT THESE HAVE ARISEN WITH REGARD TO FUNDAMENTAL POINTS OVER PANAMA'S NATIONAL SOVEREIGNTY, SUCH AS THE USE OF LANDS AND WATERS. IN THIS CASE, THE U.S. PERSISTS IN WANTING TO MAINTAIN PORTIONS OF LAND, ISLANDS, PIERS AND INSTALLATIONS THAT ARE CLEARLY NOT REQUIRED FOR THE NORMAL FUNCTIONING OF THE CANAL, NEITHER FOR ITS DEFENSE OR MAINTENANCE.

IN THIS REGARD, GENERAL TORRIJOS HIMSELF EXPLAINED THAT AS FOR THE STRATEGIC NEEDS AND DEFENSE ON THE MILITARY LEVEL, IT HAS BEEN INVESTIGATED AND CONCLUDED THAT THE US MILITARY BASES DO NOT DEFEND THE CANAL AGAINST ENEMY POWERS, NOR DO THEY DEFEND AGAINST SABOTAGE BY INDIVIDUALS. RATHER, ON THE CONTRARY, THE REPRESSIVE PRESENCE OF THESE BASES ONLY SERVES TO CONVERT PANAMA INTO A LOGICAL TARGET OF THE NATIONS AT WHICH THESE NON-PANAMANIAN CANNONS AND MISSILES ARE AIMED.

TORRIJOS REPEATED THAT THESE BASES BECOME A DIRECT AND CONSTANT THREAT AGAINST THE PANAMANIAN PEOPLE. AND, HE ADDED, UNCLASSIFIED

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THE NORMAL OPERATION OF THE CANAL 24 HOURS A DAY, 365 DAYS A YEAR FOR THE FLAGS OF EVERY NATION IS ITS OWN DEFENSE, SINCE THIS IS THE TRUE SPIRIT OF THE PROJECT THAT WAS BUILT FOR THE BENEFIT OF ALL NATIONS. IT'S UNDERSTANDABLE, SAID TORRIJOS, THAT THIS SYSTEM COULD VARY ONLY DURING TIME OF WAR.

THE COMMANDER IN CHIEF ALSO SAID THAT THE CANAL IS NOT DEFENSIBLE AGAINST SABOTAGE BY INDIVIDUALS, ONLY IF IT CAN

COUNT ON THE AFFECTION OF THE PEOPLE OF PANAMA, AND HE FURTHER REMINDED THAT THE ONLY TWO CASES OF SABOTAGE IN THE HISTORY OF THE CANAL WERE PERPETRATED BY AMERICANS.

ON ANOTHER IMPORTANT AND INTERESTING ASPECT, THE TECHNICAL COMMISSION TO THE NEGOTIATORS EXPLAINED AND

DEMONSTRATED THAT ONLY A SMALL GROUP OF MEN MAKE UP THE "BRAIN TEAM" THAT MAKES THE CANAL FUNCTION, AND THAT THESE FUNCTIONS ARE RELATIVELY SIMPLE AND CAN BE LEARNED PERFECTLY WELL BY PANAMANIAN TECHNICIANS.

THE GOVERNMENT TEAM STRESSED THAT PANAMANIAN TECHNICIANS HAVE UNCOVERED THESE FUNCTIONS, BRUSHING ASIDE THE APPARENT "MYSTERY" OF THE CANAL OPERATION, AND THAT IS WHAT SOME AMERICANS INTERESTED IN PRESERVING A FALSE CONCEPT OF "GREAT COMPLEXITY" RESIST.

IN ORDER TO REAFFIRM THE ABOVE, THE COMMISSION EMPHASIZED THAT THERE IS NO SUCH "GREAT COMPLEXITY" BECAUSE IT IS OBVIOUS THAT WHEN THE CANAL WAS DESIGNED IN APPROXIMATELY 1906 ENGINEERING AND ARCHITECTURAL TECHNIQUES WERE VERY DIFFERENT FROM TODAY, NOWADAYS THEY ARE MUCH IMPROVED. OUR UNIVERSITY, IT WAS SAID, TEACHES TECHNIQUES MUCH MORE COMPLICATED.

ANOTHER SUBJECT DISCUSSED, AND ONE OF GREAT IMPORTANCE, CONCERNED OUR TAKING ADVANTAGE OF OUR GREATEST NATURAL RESOURCE. THE MINISTER OF PLANNING AND POLITICAL ECONOMY, DR. NICOLAS ARDITO BARLETTA, DEVELOPED THE ECONOMIC ASPECTS AND STRESSED THAT IN SPITE OF THE MANY BENEFITS THAT PANAMA SHOULD AND EXPECTS TO RECEIVE, THE POSITION OF THE PEOPLE AND THE REVOLUTIONARY GOVERNMENT

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IS CLEAR IN INDICATING THAT THE PRINCIPLE PRIORITY IN THE NEGOTIATIONS IS THE SOVEREIGNTY AND JURISDICTION OF PANAMA OVER ALL OF ITS TERRITORY. THE ECONOMIC FACTOR IS THEREFORE NOT A PRIORITY ISSUE.

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